definition of New "drug as per the "Guideines on Introduction of New Drugs", different States have been interpreting differently and have been clearing certain Combinations of drugs. in consultation with their experts.

According to information available the fixed dose combination of Diclofenac Sodium and Paracetamol is not marketed in any developed country.

The Sub-Committee of Experts constituted by the Drugs Consultative Committee, a statutory body, under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, is engaged in screening drugs including Combinations moving in the market, not only from the angle of safety and effectiveness but also from the angle of rationality. This is a continuous process.

Control of blindness

1068. DR. (SHRIMATI) SAROJINI MAHISHI: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of blind people in our country;

(b) what were the number of cases which developed blindness due to various Eye Diseases during last three years; year-wise;

(c) what are the main causes of blindness;

(d) whether it is a fact that certain Eye diseases and other diseases lead to blindness;

(e) if so, names of those diseases;

(f) what steps have been taken by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to control those diseases;

(g) what are the drugs used/required for control of those diseases;

(h) what is the total number of eye centres in the country under the Ministry which have been set up for control of blindness only;

(i) what are the drugs which are being given free of cost.

(j) whether it is a fact that these medicines are very costly; and

(k) what steps have been taken to make these medicines available at reasonable price?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (KUMARI SAROJ KHAPARDE): (a) ICMR Survey of 1971--73 estimated 9 million people as blind in the country, who could not see well at 6 meter distance. The National Sample Survey Organisation Survey of disabled persons done in 1981 reported 3.47 million blind people who could not see well as 3 meter distance

(b) No such estimates are available.

(c) The main causes of blindness are:—

Cataract
Trachoma & associated insections
Small-Pox (since eradicated in June, 1975)
Malnutrition
Injuries
Glaucoma

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) Some of the general diseases which may lead to blindness are Diabeties, Hypertension and Renal failure

(f) Treatment of these disease is available in the Hospitals.

(g) For the control of these diseases anti-hypertensive drugs e.g.

Aldomet
Methylodna
Hydrochlorthiazide
Propranolol
Atenolol
Metopralol

Nifedpine
Reserpine
Guanethidine and anti-diabetic drugs e.g.
Insulin Inj.
Tolbutamide
Glybenclamide
Chlorpropamide
Phenformin
Mettormin are used required.

(h) Under the National Programme for control of Blindness the following Centres have been strengthened for Control of Blindness:

Block level Health Centres	—3716
District Hospital	—404
Ophth. Deptt. of Medical Colleges	— 60
Regional Eye Institutes	— 9
Dr. R.P. Centre, New Delhi.	— 1

(i) Antibiotic Eye ointment tubes for follow up of Trachoma Control.

(j) Some of the medicines are costly.

(k) Essential Medicines used in the Blindness Control Programme are covered under the Drugs (Price Control) Order, 1987 announced by the Ministry of Industry, Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals.

Irregularities in NCERT

1069. SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that several irregularities have been found in the functioning of the National Council of Educational Research and Training, as indicated in the audit report for this *nstitution*; and

(b) if so, the action taken by Government to rectify these irregularities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI L. P. SAHI): (a) The Comptroller and Auditor General of India has made certain observations/comments on some aspects of the working of National Council of Educational Research and Training in its Audit Report of 1988 for the year ending March, 1987.

(b) Necessary follow-up action has been initiated by the NCERT on these observations.

Checking the population growth rate

1070. PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the population growth rate has shown an increase during the last few years;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) what steps Government propose to take to arrest this trend?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (KUMARI SAROJ KHAPARDE): (a) The natural growth rate of pouplation is obtained as difference between birth and death rates as available from Sample Registration System of the Registrar General, India. The latest estimates of natural growth rate at national level for the last five years are given below:

Year	Natural Growth Rate
1982	2·19%
1983	2·18%
1984	2.13%
1985	2.11%
1986	2.15%